

*To Soldier
Summit
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Community Life
in Eastern Utah



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Teancum Pratt, Founder of Helper

EDITED BY EDNA ROMANO

IN THE SPRING OF 1975, as a bicentennial project, the Sally Mauro Elementary School third grade erected a granite memorial to Teancum Pratt, Helper's first settler, at the site of the Pratt Cemetery. That summer Clifford Cunningham of Salt Lake City, a grandson of Teancum, came to Helper to see the memorial. He informed me of the whereabouts of Teancum Pratt's diary. It was in the possession of his granddaughter Mary Pratt Barker of Ogden, Utah, who has given her kind permission for its publication in commemoration of the centennial of Helper.

The typescript transcription has been used in preparing the diary for publication, and except for correcting obvious typographical errors the printed journal reflects Teancum's errant spellings of names and other peculiarities of his style and personality. Maps have been provided to clarify for the reader the location or relationship of many of the places mentioned in the diary. A few of Teancum's references are obscure; some of the persons mentioned could not be further identified; and some persons are identified by their relationship to later or present residents of the area. Footnotes have been intentionally kept to a minimum to let Teancum's unusual personality and his perception of events tell the story.

Teancum wrote of many things: his father Parley Parker Pratt's death, his struggle as a young boy, his two wives and twenty-two children, his experiences with the United Order, his arrival in Castle Valley, his settling and homesteading in Helper in 1881, his term in prison for practicing polygamy, his activities in the LDS church, sicknesses and deaths in his family, and his associations with the early pioneers in the Helper-Spring Glen area. He also recorded many of the major events in the history of the Helper and Spring Glen settlements: the opening of the first school, the coming of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad,

Mrs. Romano, a teacher at Sally Mauro Elementary School in Helper, received the Society's Teacher Award at the 1977 Annual Meeting. She wishes to give special acknowledgment to Mary Pratt Barker for her assistance in the preparation of this article. Autobiographical material on Teancum Pratt exists in several forms and versions. The editor has made use of those available to her.

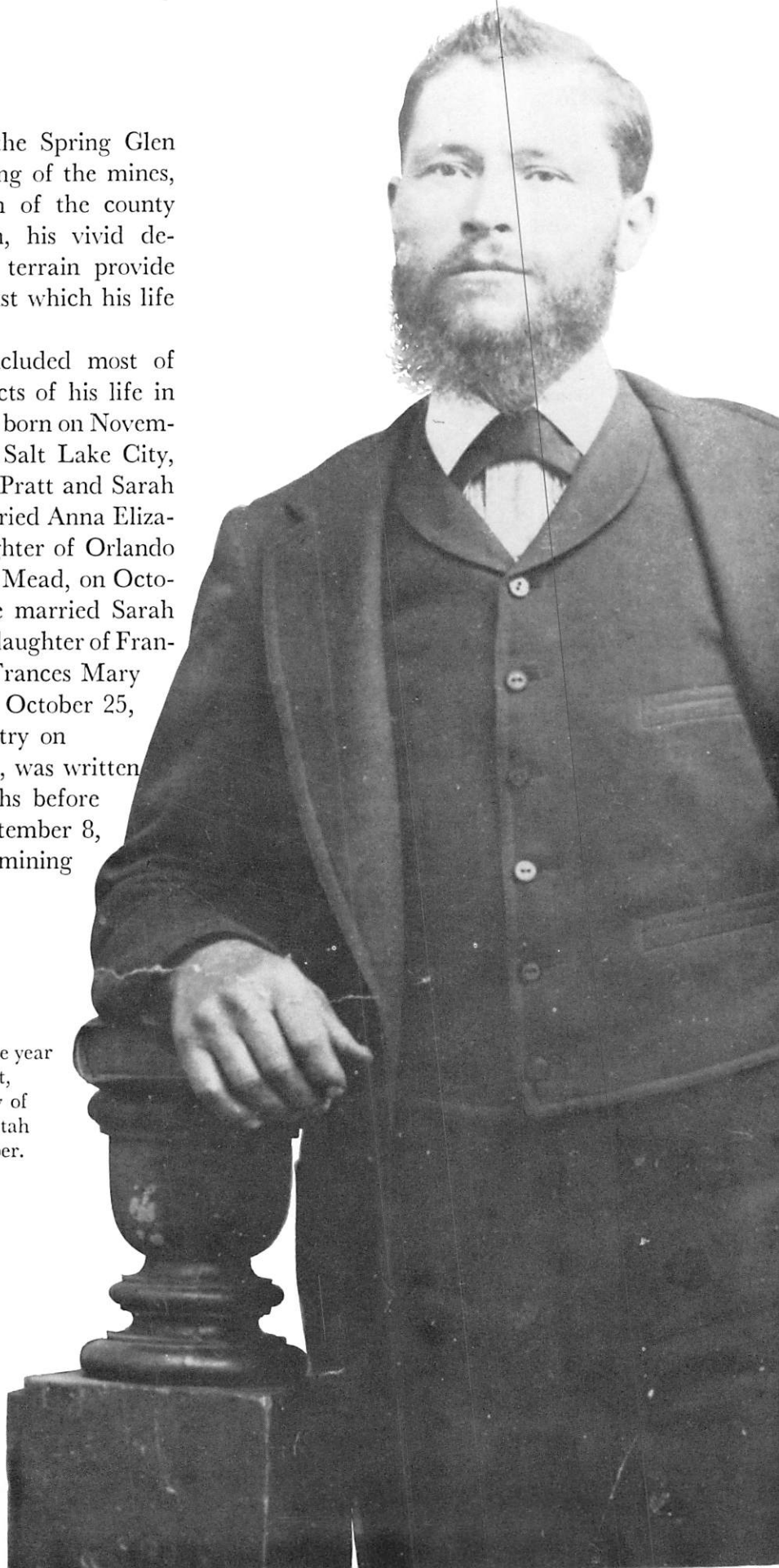
Teancum Pratt

the building of the Spring Glen Canal, the opening of the mines, and the selection of the county seat. In addition, his vivid descriptions of the terrain provide a backdrop against which his life unfolds.

Teancum included most of the important facts of his life in the diary. He was born on November 15, 1851, in Salt Lake City, to Parley Parker Pratt and Sarah Houston. He married Anna Elizabeth Mead, daughter of Orlando and Lydia Presly Mead, on October 10, 1872. He married Sarah Elizabeth Ewell, daughter of Francis Marion and Frances Mary Weech Ewell, on October 25, 1875. His last entry on January 19, 1900, was written some eight months before his death on September 8, 1900, in a coal mining accident.

I was born in the year
1851, in the Old Fort,
Great Salt Lake City of
Salt Lake County, Utah
on the 15th November.

*Teancum Pratt.
Courtesy of Bernice
Cunningham Gray.*



I was the eighth of ten living sons of Parley P. Pratt, one of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.¹ My mother was Sarah Huston, Parley P. Pratt's seventh wife.

In my 6th year, I was bereft of my father, who was assassinated in Arkansas.

The next year after his death, I with my mother's family moved to Payson, Utah. My mother married a German farmer named Tousich. My stepfather deserted us and went to California.

My sister Julia's husband, John Gardner, persuaded my mother to sell her home, give him the proceeds, and go to Goshen to live with him. Life in Goshen was miserable. We children received very little schooling. My brother-in-law was a very unwise manager.

It was about my eleventh year when I went to live with my brother Alma. He pretended that he had a great interest for my welfare and was sorry to see me growing up in ignorance and running wild in the country. I have always looked back upon the two years which I spent with him as the most sorrowful and miserable part of my life.

At the end of those two years, I received quite a start of means from my father's estate. It provided us a good piece of land in Goshen with teams and wagons.

In my 15th year, I had the misfortune to lose half of my left foot, which was frozen off while working for George Higginson. I was driving a freight team of 2 yoke of cattle. It was winter. We made it to Salt Lake City before Christmas. Mr Higginson sent me on to Lehi Fields with both teams of cattle. This took me all day and night, and by morning I was frozen badly. Mr. Higginson treated me badly, being fed on bread alone and not enough of that.

In 1867, I traded my land at the mouth of Salt Creek Canyon above Goshen. I felt Goshen was not good enough for me, farming nor my surroundings were not good enough. Taking my mother, brothers, and sisters, I moved to Salt Lake City. I attended school 2 years, then removed to Goshen as teacher, but was unstable as wind and shifted to Santaquin, Utah. While here I married Miss Anna Eliza Mead on October 10, 1872. My first born, Teancum Orlando was born on December 13, 1873. He drowned at Prattville on August 27, 1875.

In 1874, we removed to Prattville, and joined my brother Helemen, a ward in the United Order.² While in Prattville, on October 25, 1875, I took a second wife, Sarah Elizabeth Ewell, age 15. My second child, Ether, was born to Annie on November 11, 1875, at Prattville.

From Prattville, the United Order, breaking up, we moved to Richfield. We lived here for 2 years, then moved to Kingston, Utah, where we tried the experiment of living and eating at one table. This was a failure. I was at last tired and concluded to quit and commence the old and incorrect way again of everyone for himself and the devil for all. My wife Annie, bore me a daughter just previous to our move on October 26, 1877, which we named Mary Lydia, and in February 26, 1878, my wife Sarah, bore her first child which we named Parley Pahoran, in Kingston.³

I went to Hillsdale, then Panquitch, and then Santaquin in 1879. I taught school in Spring Lake and suffered awful poverty.

¹ Pratt (1807-57) was born in New York. He was ordained an apostle by Joseph Smith, Jr., in 1835.

² Prattville was located four miles northeast of Richfield between Venice and Glenwood in Sevier County.

³ Kingston is five miles southeast of Junction in Piute County.

In Spring Lake three children were born to me; Annie bearing twins, Alma and Nephi on December 7, 1879. Alma died of cold on December 27, 1879. Sarah gave birth to Sarah Elizabeth on January 24, 1880.⁴

I found that my physical strength was not sufficient to endure hard labor and about the last of June, 1880, I came to the conclusion that I would go out to the frontier and take up land and either sink or swim in the attempt to maintain ourselves. So hearing of Castle Valley, I struck out and came to Price River on the 24th of July, 1880, coming down Gordon Creek from Pleasant Valley and locating at the mouth of Gordon Creek. But the neighbors were hunters, trappers, and bachelors, and sore-heads and did not welcome any settlers, so I had a very tough time of it and had to leave that location and moved up to what is now Helper, at that time a lovely wilderness, and commenced anew in 1881.⁵

Then came the Rio Grande Railroad. Money was plentiful, but I could never get ahead. The Price River was unfortunate in getting its first settlers. They were not the honest kind who will pull together and sacrifice for each other.

In the winter of 1880-1881, on New Year's Day, I was frozen in the mountains on Beaver Creek trying to get to Spanish Fork, and had to come back and lay all winter with my feet frozen.

After moving to Helper Homestead, I made a small ditch upon each side of the Price River and commenced to raise such crops as we most needed, but the land proved not fertile and crop after crop was almost a failure and being unable to fence, it was very difficult to keep the cattle from out crops. Lehi Marion, my eighth child, was born to Sarah at Spring Glen on October 4, 1881.

Sister Mead came into the Valley and settled with us and also Brother F. M. Ewell and family about the year 1882, and so my wives and family would not be so lonely.

There were plenty of deer and rabbits and ducks at that time, but it was never profitable to hunt, as it took too much time. We, at that time were without cows and teams or vehicles or tools or machinery and seemed to live on nothing. I was lamed very badly in my right leg by the caving of a bank in 1882. It was early spring. I worked at grubbing and ditching sitting on a low stool, but through all those terrible days, I was determined not to give up but to conquer the wilderness and become independent of the rich and only have to work for myself, and I could see light ahead, and had faith that I should accomplish this result.

1882

During 1882, we raised very little vegetables, potatoes, beets, carrots, melons, etc. We all lived together in a part cellar and one log room beside. During the winter, I hunted, dressing my feet in gunny sacks, which was plentiful about the railroad camp. My children were small and numerous, and my crops poor.

Monday, June 5 [1882] Rose at 4 o'clock, put water on 4 different places, corn, sugar cane, potatoes, and bottom piece for corn. Found a way of letting out a small stream of water at any place along the ditch by putting in a board with a notch cut in the middle of the side and putting small rocks below for the water to fall upon. Sarah and Amande planted popcorn and beans, also some watermelons. At noon we were driven out of the bowery and into the house by a shower of rain which lasted

⁴ Spring Lake is between Santaquin and Payson in Utah County.

⁵ Pratt evidently wrote this part of the journal from notes after Helper was named.

long enough to wet the ground about an inch deep. We had the first pigweed greens of the season today for dinner.

Tuesday June 6 [1882] Made a piece of levee to ward off floods from the garden, hoed corn, watered a little.

Ether came running in breathless haste this afternoon to tell me that to hurry home and get my gun for he said, "We wants you to come and shoot a hawk which has killed a little chick." This is the first time this kind of thing has happened to us in Castle Valley.

I take comfort in reading the Deseret News and [Woman's] Exponent after having been deprived of them in a great measure for 2 years.

I am looking forward to the time in the near future when we will have a mail route and post office on Price River.

June 7 Wednesday [1882] Annie went visiting this afternoon and brought word of there being 5 or 6 head of stray sheep in the vicinity.

Sarah began planting white beans. We had our first radishes and lettuce for dinner.

I am pretty near through with the levee. Today Sarah and myself also have replanted the corn.

Thursday June 8 [1882] Hoed the onion bed partly over. Continued work on the levee hoping to finish it before any heavy rain comes, so it will catch the floods.

Sister Mead and Amanda planted some white beans and finished planting corn. Also they planted some squash; cucumbers coming up. I also finished plowing and took the plow home to Ewell's.

Today was Sarah's birthday. She forgot it till night. She is 22 years old.

Friday June 9 [1882] Finished the levee and ditch around the outside of the land and prepared some land for white beans, which we planted in the afternoon. Began fencing across the river.

This evening I crossed the river to get the cows and saw three fresh bear tracks going up the river. Bears are frequently on the river during June and July.

Mrs. Babcock and Mary Ewell visited us today.⁶ They are not on very friendly terms with each other.

Idona was stung by a scorpion on the left arm in 3 or 4 different places.⁷ Her mother put fresh cow-dropping and soda upon it and it seems to be doing quite well.

Saturday June 10 [1882] Finished planting the white beans and they were the last of my planting for the season unless I can plant some lucern.

Mr. Harper brought us the news from the Clear Creek Post Office which we esteemed a favor.⁸ He also brought a letter from my sister Zina.

Sunday June 11 [1882] Two men passed here carrying their blankets from Colorado going to Montana or the Northwest. There has been a numerous lot of that kind of travel past here all through the latter part of winter and spring. They complain of hard times in Colorado. We have rumors of busy times ahead on the Railroad which it is said will start this way from Clear Creek on the 15th of June.

⁶ Jane Babcock was Harry Babcock's wife; they lived in Spring Glen. Mary Ewell, wife of Lorenzo Ewell, was Sarah Pratt's sister-in-law.

⁷ Idona Mead was Annie Pratt's sister.

⁸ Tucker was called Clear Creek at this time. The name was changed to Tucker because of the other town of Clear Creek near Scofield.

Monday June 12 [1882] Hoed various of the garden patches and got fencing from the island to fence my crops, also grubbed a while in the evening. One of the oxen stepped upon 2 of my toes this afternoon and for a short time, I feared they were seriously hurt, as they were between the oxen's foot and a sharp rock. Thanks to Providence, they are feeling nearly well tonight.

My eyes are weak and threaten to become really sore so that writing is not convenient, especially at night.

Tuesday June 13 [1882] Watered land upon which I sowed some lucern seed. Had a nice shower of rain. Atmosphere so cold I fear frost tonight.

I went down the river to hunt some kind of grasses, but got none.

Mat Simmons took dinner with us.

At dusk, Miss Gullen and Handricks arrived enroute for their garden. They stayed overnight with us and told us news of such things as we wished to hear about the settlements.

Wednesday June 14 [1882] Watered and grubbed the land. Annie transplanted 4 rows of cabbage.

In the evening, I went to Ewell's to get the cows and oxen which had gone down there the first time for over a month. Showed Sister Ewell how to water her garden.

Thursday June 15 [1882] Finished grubbing the lucern land and hoeing the sugar cane the first time over and setting out the cabbage patch.

Frank and Lorenzo Ewell arrived from Clear Creek this evening.⁹ There have been over a dozen men passing here on foot today, coming from Colorado and going to various places in the west. They report hard times in the mining camps in some parts of Colorado. They are generally hungry and want to buy provisions.

Friday June 16 [1882] The children are hungry and so were we all, having but little in the house to eat. In the forenoon, I went into Spring Canyon and found plenty of fresh deer signs there. In the evening took the team and in company with Lorenzo Ewell, we camped at the springs overnight. In the morning we found and obtained some meat.

Saturday June 17 [1882] Plowed land for lucern all day.

Sunday June 18 [1882] Stayed at home most of the day and had a good rest. F. M. Ewell arrived from Clear Creek and brought me two copies of the Deseret News. I enjoyed myself greatly.

Monday June 19 [1882] Planted my lucern and took Brother Ewell's plow home with the handles broken. Peas and potatoes in blossom, corn doing fine. Rain fell last night.

Wednesday June 21 [1882] This has been one of the days that are annoying and vex and try people's tempers. I was afraid of frost.

Sunday June 25 [1882] Finished watering and hoeing.

Ewell's drove up here and spent the afternoon.

Monday June 26 [1882] Started to put up the fence, watering the corn.

Saturday July 1 [1882] Having my crop planted and well started, I thought it would be wisdom for me to leave home and try to earn some money, as our provisions were getting low and we are pretty short in clothing.

⁹ Frank and Lorenzo Ewell, Sarah Pratt's brothers, hauled supplies for the railroad to Colton and Clear Creek (Tucker).

